

women who give birth by themselves, but invariably people qualify these remarks by saying that such cases are very rare except for illegitimate births where it is more common for the girl to go off by herself and deliver the baby. 844

Throughout her confinement and for a short time after the birth, a pregnant woman takes many hot baths which are said to aid her by making her healthy and adding to the health of the baby. Her husband prepares for this by setting aside extra stores of firewood in the compound. At the time of birth the woman sits over a large warmed wooden bowl and delivers in the sitting position. When the infant arrives it is washed, then warmed almost continuously by the women in attendance who heat their hands over a dish of hot coals and then press the body of the child gently. Almost immediately there are attempts to have the child feed at the mother's breast. At the same time the placenta is buried in the compound with no ceremony. If it fails to descend, one of the women in attendance hastens to a local religious practitioner or a medicinal expert who gives medicines to bring it down. All adult men, including the husband, are barred from any direct participation in the birth event. Instead they usually pray during the entire birth along with their friends and a religious practitioner who may have been hired especially for this purpose. [515] • [759]

During the forty-day confinement period after the birth the woman remains inside the household, and ideally, there should be no sexual intercourse between the spouses. However, almost everyone agreed that this rule was not strictly followed among the ordinary peasant farmers or craftsmen because of the great reliance played on a woman's labor in the compound and in the fields. On the other hand, the first eight days after the birth are universally accepted as a time of strict confinement. After that, factors of wealth, number of wives, the season of the year, rural or urban residence, and personal idiosyncrasy determines the length of confinement for any particular woman. 846

During the first eight days of its life, the baby is referred to as "the little kitten," or "the little stranger." This is considered a time of great susceptibility for the parents and the new-born infant. The parents are expected to maintain very strict adherence to all cultural prescriptions in order to insure the child's safety. Practically no mention of the new baby is made in public, and even its sex is unknown outside the household except for a few very close friends of the family, and these are expected to keep the secret. "Little kitten" is an appropriate term. Cats are highly thought of in Bornu and are the only animals except peacocks that are believed to have the right to enter heaven. Like a kitten the new baby is a welcome addition to the family; and like a kitten it is not really human. If it dies during these first eight days, it is buried unceremoniously, like a pet, in the women's section of the compound with none of the formal rituals given to a normal member of the community. [851] [825] [766]

On the Friday within the eight-day period or several days before, if the child is born on a Friday, two or three kola nuts are sent around to each of the men of the town who are relatives and friends of the parents. Similar presents are sent to the houses of all the important people in the village—the political, judicial, and religious leaders. On the same day, women who are related to the household by ties of kinship, or common membership in the neighborhood, or long-term friendships gather at the mother's compound and begin to prepare food. Some of 431 851

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796 second day. This is the time for paying the zakat, the alms-
 431 tax. Rich men give away clothes and money as sadaka at this
 545 time so that they will have good luck. Poor people give away
 777 kola nuts and perfume. This is also the time when members of
 602 the various jili give small gifts to members of linked jili
 796 with whom they have joking relationships (nangima). As the
 609 sun sets on the second day all women bang on their water stor-
 533 age pots to drive away the jinn (spirit) who brings sickness.

• [513] On the second night everyone also bathes. People, women in particular, then go to the houses of Malams where the Malam reads a section of the Koran which is then repeated by those
 708 present. The Malam then assigns counting of prayer beads (ta-
 535 jimi) for each person. Later in the night dancing is held in
 557 a central area, and many guns are discharged. Little boys mill about knocking sparks off smouldering pieces of wood onto other little boys.

[782] The last of the important festival days is the Prophet's Birthday, called variously Ngumari Kura (great festival). Ngumari Kuqulbe (kuqul means chicken), since chickens are sacrificed at this time, or Mamaludu.

F. Marriage, Family and Household.

128 In the preceding chapter, the general features of Kanuri culture were presented and it was pointed out that this was largely ideal culture. The present chapter, in contrast, deals with a single community and describes behavior as it occurs